To Voters

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HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)
Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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AN EXPLANATION

Curiously enough Vinoba and I seem to have been understood by several readers to have expressed the opinion that in putting stress upon the personal qualifications of every candidate and not upon party label we suggest that only a good 'independent' candidate should be voted for, and not one who stands on behalf of a party even if he is a man of integrity and ability. This is quite a wrong interpretation of our views and even the Sarva Seva Sangh resolution to the extent I have understood it. To make it clear by a specific instance: Here at Wardha in my own constituency Shri S. N. Agarwal and Shrimati Shantabai Narulkar have been put up by the Congress for the Parliament and the M. P. Legislative Assembly respectively. I regard them as quite fit candidates from the above standards and so in regard to them I have no hesitation in supporting the Congress. Our insistence on the personal character and ability of each candidate is to impress upon every party the necessity of putting up people of undoubted character and ability in every place.

I am aware that a good representative if he is in a minority will not have much voice in the administration of the country. But a good and honest man will always give good and honest advice, and even the majority party cannot totally disregard the views of a good opponent. He also serves his country by keeping out a self-seeker from a place of influence.

Hence voters who are not members of any particular political party must choose good men and not merely a party lebel. Of course I repeat that candidates with communal and violent views must not be voted for whether they belong to a party or are independent and are personally reputed to be men of high character.

Wardha, 17-12-'51 K. G. MASHRUWALA

BASIC EDUCATION
By Mahatma Gandhi
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QUESTION-BOX

Ministerial Posts

Q. Government servants are prohibited from taking part in political activities. Are not the ministers, who draw Government salaries Government servants? If so, how can they carry on political propaganda? Should they not first resign their posts and then stand for election or carry on propaganda for it?

A. Ministers, as such, are not Government *servants.* They hold their offices as elected representatives of the people. The emoluments which they receive are not supposed to be their salaries or remunerations for services rendered, but allowances to enable them to discharge their duties efficiently, without following any profession for their living. They are removable from their posts without notice by the President as well as the legislatures, and also by the people at the time of elections. This is all in accordance with the Constitution of India and also with the accepted practice of democratic countries. They do not cease to be members and active leaders or workers of their respective political organizations during any part of their ministerial career. Pandit Nehru is not prevented from being the Congress President although he is the Prime Minister, but his Chief Secretary cannot be even a primary member of the Congress. This shows the difference between the two sets of 'Government Officers'. To ministers, election is a part of their party organization work.

The suggestion that they should resign their posts before taking part in political and election propaganda is misconceived. That would mean absence of all government for some time. Under the constitution, the president cannot rule without his ministers. So there would be none to issue any orders in the name of the government.

Of course a constitution can be so drawn as to enable the president to rule without ministers. But in that event too, if the president is elective he would be in charge of the government during his own election. If he is not an elected president and can rule without ministers, the form of government would not be democratic.

Every act in society requires the placing of confidence in some one or another to a large

extent. If we cannot look upon the leaders as men of honour, no democratic government would be possible. The proper safeguard against abuse of power is the raising of the level of social morality, and not walls of complicated rules and regulations.

Voters' Lists

Q. The voters' lists are seriously defective and negligently prepared. This leads to unsuspected difficulties at the last moment. Is Government justified in conducting the election with such defective lists?

A. Government alone should not be held responsible for defects in the lists. It is as much the duty of the voter himself to make sure in good time, previous to elections, that his or her name has been properly registered. Mistakes are bound to occur in making lists of crores of voters. We should see what is the percentage of wrong entries. Government has to do this work through clerks who have not any previous experience of this type of work and are often of limited intelligence, and their proficiency in the foreign language imposed on them is often poor. The voters are even less intelligent, and even when intelligent they hardly co-operate with the clerks. Thus it is a thankless task for the clerks. Government and administrative machinery are more to be sympathized with than reproached if mistakes are discovered. It should also be remembered that this is the first election on such a tremendous scale in the whole world, and the fact that it has been undertaken in an illiterate country like India by an altogether new-born government must be regarded as a great and commendable venture. I understand that facilities have been provided for correction of mistakes even at a late stage. The experience will show if we may not have to resort to indirect election, which will have its own drawbacks, but might be more economic.

Wardha, 5-12-'51 K. G. MASHRUWALA

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DR. KUMARAPPA — A BIOGRAPHY

(*By G. Ramachandran*)

This is a brief biography of Shri J. C. Kumarappa in Tamil. The author, Shri M. Vinaik, is one of Shri Kumarappa's close co-workers during the last 14 years. It is good that the biography has appeared in Tamil to begin with. For, Shri Kumarappa is a Tamilian all-right in spite of all his western education and training and his long life outside Tamilnad. The book is full of interesting anecdotes about his boyhood and youth and later years. Shri Kumarappa with all his fun and frolic must have given scope for many a good story.

It is evident from the biography that Shri Kumarappa, even from his early years, possessed a truthful and unbending character, with a deep sympathy for all, including animals, in pain or in distress. That is one of the explanations why he, born in a Christian family and educated and trained in England and in America, has become an uncompromising vegetarian. His first meeting with Gandhiji and his conversion to constructive work are told with a wealth of amusing incidents and conversations. The biography also shows how, Shri Kumarappa, the rebel against the British rule is still a rebel in free India against many of the policies and programmes of the present Congress Governments at the Centre and the States. This is a biography which young people in Tamilnad will do well to read. It is the inspiring story of a man who started amassing wealth and then turned away to constructive work, showing that there are great adventures and joys in such work.

Shri M. Vinaik has collected his materials from notes, articles, essays, letters, newspaper cuttings, talks with friends and relations and researches in all possible directions covering many years. He has written a good and convincing story for his readers. We should have an early translation in Hindi and in English for the wider public in India and outside; for, has not Shri Kumarappa today become the outstanding apostle of the economics of peace in the country?

The biography is entitled Dr. Kumarappa. It is explained how Gandhiji conferred this doctorate on Shri Kumarappa in his capacity as the Chancellor of the Gujarat Vidyapith! Who had a greater right than Gandhiji to confer the Doctorate and who could have deserved it better than Shri Kumarappa? The title conferred was D. V. I. i.e. Doctor of Village Industries!

Sarvodaya Conference, 1952

The next Sarvodaya Conference will be held in the first or second week of April in U. P. The exact dates and the venue will be announced as early as possible.

Sevagram, 8-12-'51 VALLABHSWAMI
for SECRETARY, SARVODAYA SAMAJ

AN EXPERIMENT IN BASIC EDUCATION

(*By Gurbachan Singh Bedi*)

In 1949, I was sent up for a year's Basic Education Training at Jamia Millia, Delhi. On my return, I began thinking hard to see if I could make myself useful in the sphere of Nai Talim, the government plans about which would yet take some time to mature.

To start my experiment, the training of the teachers for the introduction and the conducting of the experiment, was the first essential condition. But the lack of funds appeared to be a big hurdle. In consultation with my teachers, I decided to hold a ten-day short course at Tarn-Taran, which only selected teachers were asked to attend. They were to come from and go back to their villages daily, bringing their lunch with them, thus eliminating any expenditure.

This training camp was held from 21st to 26th August '50 and then on the 2nd, 9th, 15th and 16th of September 1950 with 31 teachers participating in it. In order to do as much work as possible in a short time, we were working for nine hours a day, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The object of this training camp, though a short one, was to enable the teachers to introduce *takli* spinning and some other handicrafts so as to make the schools basic-minded. The following daily programme was observed:

1.	8- 0 — 8-15 a.m.	Sweeping and cleaning the place ourselves.
2.	8-15 — 8-30 a.m.	Morning song and prayer.
3.	8-30 — 9-15 a.m.	Talk on Basic Education.
4.	9-15 — 10- 0 a.m.	Talk on Correlation.
5.	10- 0 — 10-30 a.m.	Recess.
6.	10-30 — 12- 0 noon	*Takli* spinning.
7.	12- 0 — 1- 0 p.m.	Community lunch.
8.	1- 0 — 2- 0 p.m.	Rest.
9.	2- 0 — 3- 0 p.m.	Writing of the day's lecture notes, fairly in ink.
10.	3- 0 — 4- 0 p.m.	Community spinning with silence.
11.	4- 0 — 4-40 p.m.	Other handicrafts like *abri*-making,* ink-making, *muhra*-making,† vegetable gardening etc.
12.	4-40 — 5- 0 p.m.	Community tea (prepared by ourselves).

N. B. 1. Sweeping and cleaning was done four times a day.

2. After lunch and tea utensils were cleaned by ourselves.

3. Songs were sung at lunch and tea times and while spinning.

An effort was made during this short camp of 70 hours to infuse a spirit of service and working together, aiming at teaching the value of community life and the dignity of labour. Care was also taken to guide the trainees to make use in their schools of what they had learnt at the camp. Plans "to follow up" were also chalked out, the lecture note books serving as their guides.

This class of 31 teachers, who had undergone this course of training, was then converted into a "Basic Education Society" (B. E. S.), which held its meetings every month at Tarn-Taran, to discuss the working of the experiment, to find solutions of the difficulties and to make suggestions.

In our part of the country, there were heavy rains in the month of September 1950. But in spite of unprecedented rains and flood which did much harm to the cotton crop, the experiment was launched in all the 31 schools in classes 4th and 1st (24 + 7 = 31) in the months of October and November, 1950, on a sort of co-operative basis. Each boy bought his own *takli* and winder and each boy contributed his own share of *poonis*. Where this share contribution of *poonis* was not forthcoming, loans were advanced from the junior Red Cross societies for the purchase of cotton. At the end of the year in March-April 1951, it was found that more than two maunds of fine yarn (ranging from 6 to 42 counts) was spun by the students of these 31 schools, with only one class working at *takli*. All this yarn was collected in two instalments and sold out for more than rupees two hundred by the B. E. S. It would have brought us Rs 30 to Rs 40/- more, had it been wound according to the requirements of the buyers. Still all loans were returned and shares paid back in full and small savings by each school were also made.

Being encouraged by this experiment, the B. E. S., Tarn-Taran, decided in April last to start *takli* spinning in all the four classes of those 31 schools on a co-operative basis from May 1951. The B. E. S. also decided that a second training camp be also held for the teachers of the remaining 21 schools of the Sub-Division. This too, has been done from 21-5-'51 to 26-5-'51. This second camp of 54 hours of six working days has done quite well. Now *takli* spinning, vegetable gardening and handicrafts have been introduced in all the four classes of 52 schools of Tarn-Taran Sub-division, without putting the Government or the District Board of Amritsar to any expense. These 52 schools are now quite ready for being converted into schools of the basic type. Only the teachers might need another short camp course to enable them to understand more fully the method of correlation since a 54 or even a 70 hours' training camp cannot give them enough knowledge and guidance for the understanding of this difficult thing.

This experiment conducted in a humble way has its own value in the scheme of Basic Education. Experiments of this type if conducted by the Jamia Millia or Wardha-trained-men in Basic Education, are sure to prepare a good ground for conversion of the present schools into the schools of the Basic Type. This little effort made in a part of the State of the Punjab, if given the consideration it merits, can lead to very useful results.

Tarn-Taran, Punjab

* Thick decorated paper used in book-binding.

† Seats woven out of reeds.

HARIJAN

Dec. 22 1951

TO VOTERS

(*By Desh Raj*)

[I wholeheartedly endorse the following appeal to voters sent to me for publication several months ago by its author, Shri Desh Raj, a silent worker in New Delhi. I had preserved it till now so that it might be published at the right time : — K. G. M.]

Let me introduce myself to you as an humble devotee of Gandhiji. I am no partyman. I care the least which party falls or comes to power. What I do wish is that we should act like a civilized, peaceful and honourable people with the least loss or injury to human life during the general elections, which have already begun.

The period of elections, generally is one of great tension and excitement. Let us not lose our heads but try to remain calm during it. The agents of the various candidates will be very alert and try to create mischief through the Press, the platform and in several other ways. During the elections, the liberty of which we are so proud is sometimes abused to such a great extent that our heads must hang down for shame. Violence breaks out in several forms. The hired agents of some of the candidates are responsible for it; but when mischief actually breaks out, they hide themselves.

Our country is a Republic now. We have got full political liberty now, although we have yet to work for our economic emancipation. We have all got the equality of possessing the right to vote. This is no small right if it is exercised carefully and after full consideration. We are free to vote for any candidate of any party we like. The vote is a sacred trust. Let us not, therefore yield to any temptation of money, favour or any other bait. If we at all do so, it will be a sin against both God and society. Let us use our judgement and try to perform this duty of ours honestly and according to the dictates of our conscience. Let us listen to all or none, but try to be propaganda-proof. Let us think for ourselves and vote for the party we think best for our interests. This right we exercise once every five years; so let us do it with the utmost care. We should not wait for any conveyance to be lifted to the polling booth, but go there on foot or at our own expense. We should not accept food or drink offered by the agents of the candidates, but arrange them ourselves. To record a vote is a duty to ourselves and to the country and, therefore, no favour to any candidate.

We shall be the greatest fools if we abuse others or quarrel or fight with them for the sake of the contesting candidates. Let it be no secret to the less politically advanced people that these candidates meet and treat one another as friends; but we sometimes go to the point of breaking one another's head for their sakes. What a shame! Let us also be careful not to harass those who are in charge of the management of the polling booths. The Government have promised a fair chance for all. If anyone is at all found breaking this promise, the matter should be reported to the higher authorities. If we try to take the law into our own hands, the results are often dangerous for all. If we feel that mischief is being perpetrated at a certain place, we should not be a party to it, but should go away from there. It is then sure to come to an end.

No one should try to coerce anyone else to record his or her vote for a certain candidate. All individuals, may they be mutually related as father and son or husband and wife, should be given a free hand in recording their respective votes. Let us be broad-minded, and let there be no quarrel among us about it.

Having recorded our votes, we should go back home, so that others too may do it conveniently. We had better note our names and other particulars carefully from the Voters' Register with the help of our own friends and acquaintances so that we may not have to depend on the help of the hired agents of the candidates.

How pleasing a sight it would be if all the voters of a village go to the booth together like friends irrespective of the fact that they might choose different candidates to place their votes with! There should be no quarrel about it. Do we not choose different games to play, different deities to worship and different articles of diet to consume? What if we have chosen different candidates during elections? We should give a good proof of tolerance regarding it. Our country shall, then, be a true Democratic Sovereign Republic. Jai Bharat.

Abuse of Gandhiji's Pictures

A correspondent from Howrah sends me two leaflets published by the local Congress. Both of them bear the well-known picture of Mahatma Gandhi with folded hands and a ballot box bearing the Congress symbol of a pair of bullocks, suggesting that Mahatma Gandhi appeals to the people with folded hands to vote Congress.

I cannot but regard this as an unbecoming manner of exploiting the name of Gandhiji for winning elections. This is as bad as traders or merchants who sell Mahatma Gandhi *bidis* and other goods.

I believe that Government should ban such abuse of Gandhiji's pictures, and the various political parties also should, of their own accord, issue similar instructions.

Wardha, 11-12-'51 K. G. M.

SECULAR OR RELIGIOUS ?

What is a secular State ? Is India a secular State ? If so, how and why ? Answers to these questions were given by Acharya Vinoba Bhave on 15th November 1951 at Rajghat, Delhi.

Vinoba said that doubts and suspicions about the secular nature of the State of India were widespread in the country. Doubt was an enemy of life. It could mar life. Some doubts were born of mere misuse of words. Misconceptions were created just because of wrong use of words.

Manu's ten-fold *dharma* * was not very different from the Ten Commandments of Moses which form part of the Jewish and Christian creeds. Vinoba said he was talking of the ancient sage Manu, not of the comparatively modern book *Manusmriti*, attributed to Manu. Even in the Vedic age Manu's sayings were respected. A Vedic verse said that any saying of Manu should be accepted as a medicine. The idea was that even if it was bitter, it was beneficial. The ten-fold *dharma* of Manu belonged to the sage who became a part of the ancient tradition. It had been modified and included in the Jewish and Christian doctrines.

Vinoba asked his audience to consider what the words *dharma* and secular exactly meant. Manu had laid down a ten-fold *dharma* or duty. For instance, Manu had condemned stealing. The Government of India had no different views. Actually no society could progress if it encouraged thievery. Manu had extolled cleanliness and health as well as education. Did our Government go against these precepts ? As to Manu's insistence on truth, our Government had made " सत्यमेव जयते " (Only truth triumphs) as the national motto. The text of the motto is from the Upanishads, a basic book.

If one translated the word " secular " as religionless, it would amount to abusing the Government. Even if one said that the Government being secular was unconnected with *dharma*, the interpretation could be used for wrong propaganda. The word *dharma* could not properly be rendered into any other language. Similarly, the word " secular " could not be easily translated. If instead of " religion," the word " path " was used, the Government would have to be described as one following no path, or even as one following a wrong path.

Seeing the difficulty he had thought of the word *Vedanti*. *Vedanti* did not mean Vedic. Vedanta accepted all religions and allowed all modes of worship. It taught self-realization, but did not suggest any particular mode of worship. Thus *Vedanti* was a suitable phrase to describe the secular nature of the State.

Spiritual Values

A *sadhu* of the Ramakrishna Mission once asked Vinoba whither the country was going. People in that Mission could not be charged with any kind of communalism. This *sadhu* was in any case not communal. When asked to explain his question, the *sadhu* argued that since India was now secular, it meant that it no longer accepted spiritual values. His answer, said Vinobaji, was to point out that if the country no longer cared for spiritual values, the Government would not have selected " Only truth triumphs " as the State motto.

Secondly, the Government would not have provided for universal franchise. There was the condition that one should be above 21 years of age. But otherwise everyone had a vote. The vote was not based on physique. If it had been so, bigger and stronger men would have two or three votes as against one for a small weak man. Intelligence, too, was not the basis. If brains were to be considered, an intellectual might have even a thousand votes against one vote of the fool. Fools and philosophers had been treated as equals because the basis was the soul. Each one had a soul. True that beasts had not been given the vote, and the condition that a voter should be 21 years of age had been laid down. Still the basis was spiritual and it was, therefore, not right to allege that the Government did not recognize spiritual values.

The *sadhu* was not quite satisfied and asked if Vinobaji would declare the Government a *Vedanti* Government. Not really, was his answer. No Government could delve deep into philosophy. But since the Government had the same mentality as a *Vedanti*, it might be described as such. Like a *Vedanti*, it was not atheist.

Perhaps, the only word which could bring out the right sense was *Lok-yatrik*, to describe a Government which wanted to carry on in a practical way, believing in impartiality and justice.

English, the Real Trouble

The real trouble was that we still used English. All thinking was done in English. There would have been no confusion if thinking had not been done in English. A word from our own language would have been chosen and there would have been no doubts or difficulties. English had been given a lease of life for fifteen years. The result was that even an educated peasant in India could not appreciate what was being done by the Government as well as, say, an American could.

Such use of a foreign language was extremely dangerous and the sooner the danger was removed the better. The word *dharma* was a great word. In India it was like life. So when talking of secularism and *dharma* a good deal of confusion was created. Even educated people were misled. For instance, many people asked if the recitation of verses from the Vedas in schools was correct in a secular State. Such stupid questions were raised only because the English word " secular " was used.

Recently, during his visit to Aligarh, he was asked to address the University. His speech was heard with great patience and attention. Not that he had talked of commonplace things with which students and others there were familiar. He had talked of how religions, not excluding Islam, could be purified.

The function, he was told, would begin with a recitation from the Quran ; and the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Zakir Hussain, said that all had to keep standing while the verses were being recited. He had readily agreed to fall in and had enjoyed it all, since he knew a little Arabic himself. Some might ask if verses from the Quran could be recited in an educational institution. This was a wrong question.

The main thing was that people should be in no doubt about the meaning of the word 'secular'. He had expounded the meaning because he knew that during the elections great efforts would be made to spread all kinds of wrong ideas about secularism.

(Adapted from the *Hindustan Times*, dated 17th Nov. '51.)

* धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥
(Courage, forgiveness, restraint, non-theft, cleanliness, control of senses, intelligence, knowledge, truth and non-anger : this is ten-fold *dharma*.)

QUARRELSOME WORDS

Many a human quarrel is the result of words, which mankind has brought into use. Some words are quarrelsome enough even in the languages of their origin. They become particularly quarrelsome, when it is sought to impart to them ideas which are new or additional, and not generally understood by the majority of the people using them.

They become still more quarrelsome when they are untranslatable in another language, and instead of adopting them straight off or through newly coined words, are sought to be translated through some well-known words of the language into which they are being translated.

In the article " Secular or Religious ?" (printed in this issue) Vinoba has referred to the diffi-

culties created by the word 'secular' popularly used in reference to the Constitution of the Union of India, and the word *dharma* as understood in Indian languages. To interpret 'secular' as devoid of *dharma* is as wrong as to interpret *dharma* as religion. The word *dharma* is not the same as the English word 'religion'. In fact no single word of the English language can adequately express all that is connoted by the word *dharma*. From very old times *dharma* has connoted different senses according to the context. But even then, until it came into contact with the English language, it never meant a religion. The only words approaching the English sense of religion are *patha*, *marga* (i.e. road), or *sampradaya* (system). *Pakhanda* was once almost exactly used in the sense of 'religion' but later on it carried with it the suggestion of a degenerate sect. Similarly, the word 'secular' has more than one sense in English itself. In its application to the Government of India a particular turn has been given to it. It is clear from the context that what it desires to convey is that the State of India does not own or accept the tenets of any particular religion or religious sect as a creed. This is clear from the articles 15 to 17 of the Constitution. It will regard all religions and religious sects and their respective followers as equal in law and public administration. It does not mean that it will annihilate or suppress every or, for the matter of that, any religion or religious sect, provided it does not transgress broad ethical principles. As Vinoba has shown, it does not seek to make the country devoid of all religions and still less of *dharma*, as properly understood in the Indian sense, i.e. rules of human duties and morality.

Vinoba has suggested *Vedanti* as the equivalent of 'secular'. That, too, would be an attempt to add to the term a meaning not usually associated with it. Such attempts are not free from risk. *Vedanti* itself, like *varna* and 'trustee' used by Gandhiji, is a quarrelsome word. My own feeling is that it is better to have a new word for a new idea. The trusteeship idea has been well expressed by the word *vishwasta-vritti* by Vinoba. To bring about Gandhiji's meaning of the word *varnavyavastha* I would like to use the word *vrittivyavastha* (वृत्तिव्यवस्था). For religion I have used the word *anugama* (अनुगम) in my book *Jivan Shodhan* (जीवन शोधन) and *anugami* (अनुगामी) for the follower of a religion. The idea of 'secular state', I think, would be better expressed if we coin quite a different term —, for instance — negatively by *avishesha-anugami* (अविशेष अनुगामी) not following any particular religion, or, better and positively, by *vyapakdharmi* (व्यापक-धर्मी) following universal principles of right conduct.

Of course, those who want India to be the upholder of the Sanatana Hindu religion will not be satisfied with this. But that would be a straight issue without a strain on words.

Wardha, 4-12-'51 **K. G. MASHRUWALA**

SHRI VINOBA'S TELANGANA TOUR
XI

April 22, Sivannagudu (Eighth Halt, 10 miles).

The thought-provoking speech at Vavilapalli (vide *Harijan*, 15-12-'51) naturally became a first class topic of discussion among the Congress workers and the people who had heard it. They saw a new meaning in the Vamana Avatar legend and in the law relating to land. Before we started from Vavilapalli for this place, Vinoba received a gift of 80 acres of land from that small village.

Sivannagudu gave start to a new type of work for Vinoba. It was found that one of the zamindars had taken possession of several plots of land in this village, in some cases illegally, in others though not technically so, but in a morally unjustifiable manner. It was impossible for the dispossessed peasants to fight him. They presented their applications to Vinoba. The zamindar was present and from 3 to 5-30 p.m. Vinoba found himself holding a court. The only sanction he had was of awakening the moral sense of both the parties. He succeeded in his appeal. The peasants in some cases got back lands, which they had lost for years. In one case a peasant, who had been deprived of three acres of land some years ago, was prepared to pay Rs 600 to recover it. The zamindar demanded Rs 900. Vinoba induced him to be satisfied with Rs 600. He acceded to the request. In another case a peasant was found to have made a false statement against the zamindar. Vinoba gave him a gentle rebuke.

Thus it went on till 5-30, when after the prayer, Vinoba began to speak:

His purpose in visiting Telangana, Vinoba said, was to find a peaceful solution of the problem which raged there. The way they had been able to settle the disputes that day held out the hope that if only they would follow it up, the rich and the poor could still be reconciled and the violent discord which had disfigured their life would be driven out. It was a pointer that if the rich and the poor would come together and try to resolve their differences in a spirit of give and take, the problem would be erased. Though some of the applications which he received that day were not legitimate, most were quite fair and he was glad that they were amicably settled. Vinoba was convinced that if the workers — Congressites and others — set out to tackle the problem in the right spirit and manner, much could be achieved. But from what he had seen it would seem that the Congress workers had not been able to do any appreciable service. That was the reason for the existence of so much disunity and discord among them. He hoped that the Congress and other workers would think over the subject and learn from what they had witnessed at that place.

Vinoba next addressed a few words to the rich. After his arrival there, he contacted them and asked them to donate lands for the poor. And though they had given rather stingily, he thanked them for whatever they gave. He would be very happy if they felt prompted to give more even while he was speaking, and announced their decisions at the meeting. "Let me tell you that though I ask for these donations on behalf of the poor, ultimately they are going to bless both the rich and the poor. There is an old Sanskrit saying which declares that charity, enjoyment, and destruction are the only three courses open for wealth. Either you enjoy it or give it to the needy, or it gets destroyed." Those who had lands, much beyond their requirements, could not consume all the produce which those lands yielded. The capacity of the stomach was limited. Hence while they might fill their stomachs fully and unstintedly, let them not hanker after filling their stores. The stores belonged ultimately either to him (through gift) or to the Communists or the bandits through loot and destruction. For there were only three ways open to wealth, and no fourth. It was best therefore to give their savings to him. "In my boyhood," Vinoba said, "my mother used to tell me: whenever you feel a prompting to give, you must immediately act on it. She would say, those who gave are *devas* (gods)

and those who held back are *rakshasas* (demons).* There was discernment of truth in this. She taught us to be always givers; saints have also told us the same thing. They say you go on giving, and what you give will come back to you multiplied a hundredfold. The seas give their wealth to the clouds, and the clouds, in their turn, give theirs to the seas. And so the cycle goes on smoothly."

In a foot-ball game, one player kicked the ball towards another, and that one towards a third and so on. If a player would keep it to himself, the game could not proceed. The same held good, Vinoba continued, in the case of money. It had to be kept continually flowing, moving from hand to hand. The society which allowed this continual flow became happy and contented. Money was like a daughter — a trust-deposit to be given away to a suitable bridegroom when the time arrived. So too money must be passed on to the right man, that it might contribute to the prosperity of the community.

"A Brahman gentleman came to see me today. He had 300 acres of land. Now let me tell you what I feel about this. Perhaps what I am going to say may sound a little harsh. If it does, I beg his pardon, in case he is here. Our scriptures have enjoined the Brahman to willingly accept a life of poverty. It is his duty. Hence it does not become a Brahman to own so much land. In ancient times Brahmans had rendered long and distinguished services with their austerities for the good of the society. This is the reason for the class being still held in honour. It therefore behoves them to guard this great inheritance and not waste it away. This applies not only to Brahmans, but to all others also. Every extra bit of land has to be given away to the poor and the needy. You may not give it immediately, but then you have to be prepared for it.

"I should like to say a few words to the poor too. You have to remember that however bad or wicked the rich may appear, they are after all our own kith and kin. You will certainly claim your share from them and have it ultimately, but you will do so only by following Gandhiji's path. He taught us to follow the path of peace and non-violence. You know how glorious that path is, it led us successfully to the goal of independence. Do not think that you will do any good to yourselves if you plunder the rich. Why should you lose your courage and be either down-cast or insolent? That shows desperation and lack of capacity to preserve your dignity and self-respect.

"To the Communists, I shall only say that they should stop coming at night. They should take a lesson from me, and be bold and begin to come in the day-light."

Occasionally it had been suggested to Vinoba that he should not stay with the rich. They thought it would injure the cause of the people. Vinoba, however, had no such misapprehension. For what he had been doing was like setting fire to the house in which he stayed as a guest. And he did so, by getting the host himself to light the fire. He explained to them that it was no ordinary fire that he made them kindle, but the purifying fire of the *yajna*, — the sacrificial fire. It was not the fire of destruction, but the glow of *yajna*. The Vedas tell 'Gather with a hundred hands, and give with a thousand.' "This is what Mother Earth does. We put in one seed and she yields plenty. This is what the rich too should do, because they are wise and they know how to multiply what they get. Multiply what you get from the poor and then distribute it to the poor. If you take from them one seer, make it twenty and return them to the poor. The poor will then give you back ten, which you will make into two hundred and so on. Thus let both the rich and the poor join together in a noble endeavour to create wealth and happiness for all."

The experience of the day brought to our notice another aspect of the Telangana problem. The tenants who had laboured on the lands for years were being evicted. The reason was that the Hyderabad Government had recently passed a legislation calculated to protect the interests of the tenants. It was to prevent the eviction of a tenant who had personally cultivated a piece of land for six years continuously. This had frightened the landlords and they were hurrying to dispossess the tenants before this and other steps of a like nature could be put into force. Here was an excellent opportunity for the workers to come in and offer mediation, because the unrestricted eviction of the tenants is likely to further intensify the murderous activities of Communists who exploit the situation by enticing the dissatisfied tenants to come over to their side. The result, of course, is misery, horror, hatred and violence. The only way to check this evil and resolve the growing differences lay in appealing to the good sense of the landlords. Vinoba's appeal did touch the finer chords in the minds of the landlords. It was a unique court that was held that day. There were no legal arguments, nor subtle interpretations, but there was justice rising in glowing splendour and bringing beneficence to all alike.

(Translated from Hindi) D. M.

* There is a pun on the words *deva* and *rakshasa*: The Indian word for "to give" is *de* and for "to keep, to save" is *raksh*. Hence *deva* is a giver and *rakshasa* is a keeper, a saver, a hoarder.

WANTED A NEW HUSBANDRY

[The following is taken from a talk by Herbert Read on *Michael Roberts and the Estate of Man* reported in the *Listener* of September 20, 1951, p. 456. — V. G .D.]

It is very difficult....voluntarily to reverse the processes of industrialization and power economics. But one day, not very distant, the oil wells will be dry, our forests will have been consumed and our mines will be exhausted. To trust in the inventive resources of mankind is a dangerous illusion; they are more likely to lead to further weapons of universal destruction than to a harmony with nature. In the end we must return to the land, to the estate of men. We must love it and cultivate it as the only source of life. Ten million square miles is all it amounts to........How many millions of people that land can support is calculable. Roberts believed that a gradual return to harmony with the earth as farmers, not miners, will re-establish an equilibrium between population and resources. There will be sacrifices, but they will be to Demeter and not to Moloch.

The final factors are not economic but vital.... We close-shave our cornfields with combine-harvesters, and the corncrakes mysteriously disappear. They would mysteriously return with the scythes or the horse-drawn reaper....The machine has upset the equilibrium of nature and our first action should be to put the machine into reverse....

The machine is anti-vital and will, if unchecked, destroy the life of the world. Living things depend on the cultivation of organic growths, and on a limited store of natural resources. They consume certain products of the earth, but what they consume they return to the earth in the form of essential manures. Machines also consume natural resources, but render back only smoke, gases, cinders — dead and even harmful by-products of their power. It is certain that such a process must sooner or later end in the exhaustion of the earth's resources, and Roberts shows that it will be sooner rather than later.

If we are to avoid ultimate doom, we must as Roberts says, learn a new husbandry. We must acquire the mentality of farmers and gardeners and discard that of miners and excavators. We must stop burning and blasting, and resolve to conserve and cultivate. Reafforestation and reclamation must be undertaken and the energy and cunning now devoted to the sciences of exploitation must be diverted to those of growth and creation. A distinction must be made between the sciences that promote and preserve life, and the sciences that merely generate power — the general distinction between the biological and mechanical sciences. Degrees of inter-dependence

will be discovered, and a point of equilibrium may be reached where the life-promoting sciences require a measure of support from the power-generating sciences.

A revolution is required that will exalt the biologist over the atomic physicist, the forester above the engineer, the schoolmaster over the air pilot, the farm labourer above the coal-miner....We must renounce our worship of power for power's sake. We must recognize our unconscious surrender to the forces of death, our equally unconscious rejection of the forces of life.

Such was the message of Michael Roberts.

SHRI VINOBA'S NORTHERN TOUR
VIII

Chirgaon

My previous letter records the account of Vindhya Pradesh. Now we had to enter the Uttar Pradesh again, Chirgaon being our first halt (16-10-'51). The river, Nayana, divides the Vindhya from the Uttar. It was a beautiful sight. The curve of Nayana, its green banks, and the footpath on the opposite bank resembled a bow with an arrow. "Thakorji" greeted us all. Thakorji is a bird known as *Fakta* in Urdu and *Paduki* in Hindi (Gujarati, *Hola*). Vinoba is very fond of it and however busy he might be, he would cry out "Thakorji", "Thakorji" on hearing its notes.

Shortly after crossing the Nayana, we came near the beautiful Betwa. The villagers on the way offered us breakfast, but as we had already taken it, Vinobaji asked for land instead. One of the villagers donated two acres, while another gave two *bighas*. But there were ten among the crowd who were landless. He appealed to the gathering to make up ten acres and it was promptly done.

We crossed the Betwa and arrived at Parcha, where a *bhajan mandali* accompanied by a large crowd was awaiting Vinobaji. We had to walk four miles more to reach Chirgaon. We had walked hardly a couple of miles when we saw the great Hindi poet, Shri Maithili Saran Gupta, accompanied by the well-known Hindi writers Shrimati Mahadevi Varma, Shri Dinkarji and Shri Ilachandra Joshi coming to receive Vinobaji.

The town was beautifully decorated. Shri Siyaram Saran Gupta presented a copy of the revised edition of his *Gita Samvad*, Hindi translation of the Gita. Shri Maithili Saran read out a lyric specially composed for the occasion.

At the prayer meeting, Vinoba expressed his gratefulness to the great poet for good wishes for his mission.

In Chirgaon, the total donations came to 150 acres. The visit to Chirgaon was very significant inasmuch as it stimulated the great literary men of Hindi to think seriously about the mission, in which they clearly saw the seeds of a non-violent revolution.

Jhansi

From Chirgaon we went to Badagaon and thence to Jhansi (17-10-'51). Badagaon was handicapped by the scarcity of good workers. Where a *kisan* realized that no land was offered on behalf of his village, although the neighbouring ones had given some he came with his deed of gift and dedicated all that he possessed: 43 acres. The gift may look small but the sentiment behind it makes all the qualitative difference.

The crowd began to swell even before we reached Jhansi. It became very difficult to control it. Hence Vinobaji began to walk so briskly that it seemed as if he were running. He actually did. Naturally most of the crowd lagged behind.

At Jhansi, behind Vinobaji's platform, was the statue of the great Maharani Lakshmibai. Vinobaji's mind was filled with the memories of her heroic deeds. "Jhansi has a long history behind it, but people know it only after the great Maharani," said he. "I know you will give lands, and liberally too. But I want you to give me bravely as well."

And in the prayer meeting, they did respond. Lands were donated liberally, and bravely too as would befit Rani Lakshmibai's name. One Kanaka Kumariji donated all her 500 acres. Another lady Chandramukhi Devi gave 40 out of her 80 acres. Janab Nazir Khan parted with his entire share of the compensation of his zamindari. There were other such instances also.

The people presented an address to Vinobaji. Replying to the address Vinobaji said, "I thank you for the address not because it pays a tribute to me, but because it assures me of your full and active support in the cause of my present mission."

He answered the questions of the students for more than an hour.

"In what way can we participate in this land mission?" was one of the questions. "You can certainly help me a lot. Persuade your parents to part with a proper share of their land for the landless. They will argue that they would gladly do so but for the consideration of the future of their children. And you can then relieve them of their anxiety by assuring them that you will earn your bread by your own efforts."

To another question, regarding the desirability of his foot journey in the scientific age, he replied, "If I travelled by air my work would be lost in the air, and no work would be done on land. And it is on the land that I want to work."

Some of the questions, though serious in content, were amusing in form. "What must we do to become as great as you?" they asked. "Leave alone my shortcomings and emulate my good points. In the same way take only the virtues of others and you will become even greater than I."

Another question asked if students should participate in politics. Vinoba replied that they might take part in politics but they should keep themselves aloof from group or party politics. He warned them to guard against the imposition of ideologies on them by political parties of various labels, a tendency which had been growing nowadays. "You should be like a lion, not like a lamb. We see sheep in herds. Have you ever seen a herd of lions?" he asked.

"Do not imitate the vices in men," he said to a lady questioner. "You should rather cure them, by resorting even to Satyagraha if necessary. Women should develop and expand the power of non-violence; and Satyagraha has no insignificant part to play in this."

He deprecated the fear that his mission may lead to fragmentation of land. In the first place, the question itself lost its importance, considering the great revolution the mission would bring in. Secondly, even in China where there was a Communist government, fragmentation was accepted as a principle, since the land is distributed among the cultivators in small pieces. There could be co-operation among these different independent holders in matters of mutual concern, e.g. possessing a pair of bullocks under the common ownership of ten or more families, keeping a common watch etc."

D. M.

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